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U. S. Relationship with Bangla Desh

Summary

The situation in East Pakistan is fluid. In the West, Bhutto is taking over power and still hopes to salvage something in the East by means of negotiations. In his conversations with us, he has not given up entirely on the idea, to use his own words, "of the loosest kind of confederal link between East and West." While we believe a separate Bangla Desh is a reality, we should do nothing which would tend by our own actions to foreclose such an option for him, regardless of how slim the prospects are that he will be able to retrieve something in the East in the aftermath of the Indian military victory.

Bhutto told Secretary Rogers he would understand the need for U. S. humanitarian assistance to Bangla Desh, so long as it was done in a way that no element of recognition was implied or involved and that it did not otherwise compromise his negotiating efforts. Bhutto would probably also agree that we should seek to retain a modest hard-core presence in the form of

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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.4

NNN 969001
By HRM/VSW Date 11/14/97

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO, Department of State
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our Consulate General. This is justified both on immediate security grounds as well as our long-range interests which will be to have a reasonable relationship with whatever entity evolves in the East, and whether or not it retains a loose confederal link with the West. Therefore, the short-run approach of the U.S. should be to maintain low-key informal contact, be helpful through the UN (not through India) in projected humanitarian assistance to the East, and avoid any early move towards recognition, keeping this matter under review as the situation evolves. Over the next month at least we will have to assess carefully Bhutto's tactics and plans regarding the former East wing, the nature of India's relationship with Bangla Desh, and the Bangla Desh capacity or lack of capacity to exercise effective sovereignty in its own territory.

Discussion

In Islamabad, the new Bhutto regime is faced with the immediate problem of determining and articulating its stance toward the East, including therein its attitude on Sheikh Mujib. Bhutto told the Secretary on December 18 that he

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believes there is still a chance for a loose confederal link between East and West and that he will make an effort to this end. His tactics, including those on Mujib, are not yet known.

In the East, a provisional government of Bangla Desh can be expected to move into Dacca in a matter of days. It will preside over the world's eighth largest state in terms of population, one of the poorest in terms of development, and a state with enormous problems of rehabilitation and resettlement. The focus of its energies in the short run will need to be heavily internal -- establishing itself as a government, rebuilding the administrative structure, and relocating and feeding its people. But it will probably also seek early UN membership and a maximum in international recognition. Urgent problems of humanitarian relief will probably form the first framework of international (and our own) involvement and role in Bangla Desh.

Bangla Desh owes its existence at this early date to Indian military action with Soviet backing. This gives the Indians, and through them the Russians, a strong initial position. There are other factors, however, which should

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cause Bangla Desh leaders to seek to establish some distance between their new country and India. They may find, for example, that Indian forces will not be prepared to withdraw as rapidly as the Bangla Desh might wish. They are also aware of Indian policies toward such neighbors as Nepal. They are familiar with hard Indian terms in previous India-Pakistan negotiations on matters of great importance to East Pakistan. Bangla Desh is a predominantly Muslim country and, despite statements about secularism, its leadership will be wary about the potential dangers arising from Hindu nationalism next door. Finally, Bangla Desh leaders know they have immense relief and economic problems which another impoverished nation -- India -- cannot meet and which also cannot be assured from the Soviet Union.

There is some prospect therefore that the Bangla Desh leadership will seek broad international support to help assure their independence from India and the Soviet Union. Over the longer run frictions between India and Bangla Desh seem inevitable. Consequently, there are steps which we can take, both for the short and long term, which may serve to bolster independence from both India and the Soviet Union.

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Assumptions for the Immediate Future

1. That Indian forces can be expected to remain in Bangla Desh for a minimum of 30 days and up to six months.
2. That security and other considerations require immediate contacts between our Consulate General and Indian/Bangla Desh authorities.
3. That Bhutto's comments to date indicate that as a minimum Pakistan will delay recognition and will otherwise seek to avoid dealing officially with Bangla Desh as a separate state for some time to come.
4. That the Soviet Union will move toward recognition fairly promptly, depending however on the nature of Pakistan's attitudes re 3rd country recognition.
5. That the Chinese will delay recognition indefinitely.
6. That the British and other Commonwealth countries will move fairly promptly toward normal diplomatic ties.
7. That relief and refugee assistance to Bangla Desh will remain under UN auspices, and that our participation therein need not necessarily raise questions of recognition.

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Short Range Posture

We should delay action on the longer range decision of recognition for the immediate future:

- Bangla Desh authorities will be preoccupied in the short range with getting their own house in order and may not attempt to force us to take a decision immediately.
- We need at least a month to assess (a) Bhutto's stance toward the former eastern wing; (b) India's intentions toward Bangla Desh; and (c) Bangla Desh ability to exercise effective sovereignty in its own territory.

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- There is good basis under customary international law to ask and expect Bangla Desh authorities to permit our Consulate General to continue consular functions on at least a limited basis, without prejudging the issue of recognition. (A total of 13 countries now have consular representation in Dacca.)
- It is not presently clear how and when a Bangla Desh U.N. membership request might arise, but it seems unlikely in the immediate weeks ahead. We should address this issue when it arises, including whatever bearing it might have at the time to our own relationship with that regime.

Assuming the above rationale to be accurate, the following short term posture would commend itself:

- We would try to maintain our present hard core staff in Dacca, establishing a minimum working relationship with Bangla Desh

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and Indian military authorities, making it clear that our doing so does not imply recognition. We could try routinely to keep our USIS reading rooms open but avoid other USIS operations. AID operations would be restricted to whatever participation is essential to our role in humanitarian relief.

- We would quietly convey to Bangla Desh authorities in Dacca and their representatives here that we have the matter of our future recognition under review and that in the interim we would wish to maintain a strictly consular presence.
- We would review our position on Bangla Desh UN membership on the basis of information available when the issue arises.
- We would continue to play a role in both the refugee relief (and rehabilitation) effort and former UNEPRO operations, but entirely under UN auspices. We would channel any

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foodgrain requests from Bangla Desh authorities through UN channels. We would want to get across to Bangla Desh authorities that their actions regarding minorities and humanitarian relief will have a bearing on our future policies toward Bangla Desh.

- We would keep Islamabad fully informed of our actions. Meanwhile we would urge as appropriate in our relationship with Bhutto a maximum in moderation in GOP attitudes toward Bangla Desh, and in particular seek to prevent evolution of any kind of "Hallstein Doctrine" approach to the East. We should also convey our view that Sheikh Mujib remains an important factor in the evolution of Bangla Desh internal and external policies.
- We would also want to keep in close touch with the British and other Consortium countries as to both our short and longer range policies toward Bangla Desh.

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-- We would inform India of our position, indicating that our position on recognition will depend inter alia on a commitment on withdrawal of Indian forces and the ability of the Bangla Desh government to assume the responsibilities and obligations of a sovereign and independent state.

Options for the Longer Range Future

Among the options available to us for the longer term would be to withdraw our present consular presence from Dacca and have no relationship at all with Bangla Desh. We exclude this from consideration, since this would not support our basic policy of seeking a stable Subcontinent free of domination by any of the Great Powers, notably the Soviet Union.

We also exclude, for the longer term, continuing a purely consular presence. Doing so would not serve our basic objective of seeking to limit India and especially Soviet influence. Moreover, the Bangla Desh authorities may fairly soon make our continued consular presence

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dependent on a decision on our part re recognition and therefore preclude it as a long range policy.

If these premises are correct, and of course depending on the efforts of Bhutto to explore the basis for reunion on the basis of loose confederation, the issue for the longer range becomes one of timing of recognition. If and when this becomes the issue, we believe that U.S. interests would probably best be served by relatively early recognition, for the following reasons:

-- We will want to encourage Bangla Desh freedom of action and limit its reliance on the Soviet Union and India. Previous Awami League attitudes toward the U.S. were friendly and these are probably basically unchanged. We have no issues or problems with the emergent state of Bangla Desh. We believe they will actively want a relationship with us, which should permit us to determine the timing of recognition -- provided we do not delay too long.

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- Leaving the field to the Soviets also runs the risk of contributing to a radicalization of the Bangla Desh leadership, a risk which is already real. Again, delay could enhance that risk.
- A working relationship with Bangla Desh, established early, may enhance our ability to influence more moderate Bangla Desh attitudes towards Islamabad which in turn could be decisive in the long range posture Islamabad takes towards its former Eastern province. We may be as influential as any outside power in affecting the nature of that posture and trying to preclude any kind of "Hallstein Doctrine stance" by the GOP. Eventual Pakistani rapprochement with Bangla Desh (assuming no success in efforts toward reunion) could be important (a) as a further offset to Indian hegemony over the new state and (b) in order to retain some of the advantages of an economic

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and trade relationship with the former eastern wing.

- There is also the practical consideration that a number of very complex financial problems will grow out of the division of assets and liabilities of the two former wings of Pakistan. As a major creditor, we will be involved in this process and benefit in doing so from early and official contacts with Bangla Desh.
- Finally, there is the factor of what will be considerable pressure in Congress and in the press for U.S. recognition, growing as other countries recognize. This will find particular focus in the field of humanitarian relief, where our ability to continue an active role beyond an interim period might be restricted in the absence of official Bangla Desh relations.

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